

June 16, 2009

Ms. Stephanie Strength
Environmental Protection Specialist
USDA, RUS
Engineering and Environmental Staff
1400 Independence Avenue SW, Stop 1571
Washington, D.C. 20250-1571

Dale and Suzanne Rohlfling
2310 15th Avenue NW
Rochester, MN 55901
(507) 288-2808

Dear Ms. Strength,

Thank you for coming to Plainview, MN for the CAPX2020 Hampton-Rochester-LaCrosse scoping meeting.

We own and operate a tree farm in Minnesota, Wabasha County, Zumbro Township: T.109N.-R.14W. The northern most route proposal touches our property.

B-002-001

This route disregards Minnesota Statute 216E.03, subdivision 7, of the route permit criteria, by fragmenting property and natural/critical habitat. It transects a state designated canoe route, another tree farm, and is the closest to a registered bald eagle nest of all the northern routes crossing the Zumbro River.

This route would devastate the aesthetics, and alter the river bottoms and the riparian ecosystem of this region within the Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest.

B-002-002

We ask that you please reinforce the use of existing corridors, road, rail and energy lines, when choosing the final route, pursuant to the above mentioned MN Statute.

Enclosed is a letter sent to Tom Hillstrom of Xcel Energy in April of 2009 with specific impacts of the route, area map, and photos.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Respectfully yours,



Dale and Suzanne Rohlfling
Drohl24057@aol.com
Caraway57@aol.com

B-002-001

Your comment has been noted. The criteria used to route the transmission line is described in the Macro Corridor Study which is available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. These criteria and routing process will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The project is still in the development and planning stages and the utilities have not yet permitted a route for the transmission line.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be solicited after its publication.

B-002-002

Your comment has been noted. The criteria used to route the transmission line is described in the Macro Corridor Study which is available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. These criteria and routing process will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The project is still in the development and planning stages and the utilities have not yet permitted a route for the transmission line.

April 2, 2009

Mr. Thomas Hillstrom
Supervisor, Siting and Permitting
Mr. Grant Stevenson
Senior Project Manager
Xcel Energy
414 Nicollet Mall (MP 8A)
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Mazeppa/Zumbro-Hyde
Citizens/Landowners
c/o Suzanne Rohlfing
2310 15th Ave NW
Rochester, MN 55901

Dear Mr. Hillstrom and Mr. Stevenson,

We are citizens and land owners of Mazeppa and Zumbro-Hyde Townships, Wabasha County. We are responding to the most recent route change proposals for the CAPX2020 transmission line. These routes were displayed at the community meeting in Zumbro Falls at the Zumbro Community Church on Thursday, February 26, 2009. Mr. Grant Stevenson attended and spoke to the group at that meeting.

We would like to express our concerns and address them for you with respect to the **Public Utilities Commission Minnesota Administrative Rules, 7849.5910 "Factors Considered"**.

B-002-003

Factor A. "effects on human settlement, including, but not limited to, displacement, noise, aesthetics, cultural values, recreation and public services" The new proposals appear to have no less effect on settlement. There would be, however, increased effects on recreation for the following reasons: 1- this stretch of the Zumbro River is a designated Minnesota state canoe route, with one of the two most popular routes being from the Zumbro dam to Zumbro Falls, according to the DNR. 2-this stretch of the Zumbro River is used for other water recreation, camping, fishing, sport and hunting by individuals and patrons of local camps/businesses. Aesthetics will clearly be impacted by the 150-foot transmission towers, the transmission lines, and the 150-foot clear cut needed for their maintenance. Many of the area's recreational activities will be adversely affected.

B-002-004

B-002-005

Factor C. "effects on land-based economics, including, but not limited to, agriculture, forestry, tourism and mining" Major economic impacts include the following: 1- Steeplechase Ski Area. This four-season resort relies heavily on the present landscape and aesthetics for visitor use of the ski hills themselves and the 5-mile trail network used for hiking, biking, snowmobiling and cross country skiing. Of special consideration are the specifics of downhill ski terrain specifications, leaving only the north half of the property for expansion potential. This business contributes to the local economy through employment, operating expenditures, and contribution to the activity of other local businesses. 2- Two working Tree Farms, sections 15 and 16. The white pine, red pine,

B-002-003

Your comment has been noted. While RUS does not have jurisdiction over the State of Minnesota Certificate of Need evaluations or those proceedings, however, potential impacts to human settlement and recreation will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

B-002-004

Your comment has been noted. The RUS does not have jurisdiction over the State of Minnesota Certificate of Need evaluations or content of those proceedings. Potential impacts to the aesthetic quality of the area surrounding the transmission line will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

B-002-005

Your comment has been noted. Potential impacts to social and economic resources will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

and black walnut planted on these two properties represent years of invested labor and expense that cannot be compensated. The actual monetary value of these cannot be realized until tree maturity and harvest. The clear cut for the transmission lines and the required maintenance would also prevent further plantings and potential return on the farms. These farms also utilize local businesses for tree and equipment maintenance. 3- The value of any property within sight of the transmission lines will be significantly reduced, as much of the value of rural property in the area derives from the remote setting.

B-002-006

Factor D. “effects on archaeological and historic resources” Between Wabasha County 70 and south to South Troy, there are historical points of interest. 1- The historic wagon trail north of County 7 and west of Hwy 63. 2-Troy/ South Troy. This includes the old Dale cemetery, the old South Troy town site near the existing cemetery and schoolhouse, the South Troy Church, and the grave of Frederick Ingalls, the infant son of Caroline and Charles Ingalls and brother of Laura Ingalls Wilder. The Historical Society has agreed to enter this site onto their Historical Society List. There is consideration for a historical marker, according to Mr. Allen Whipple, local historian.

B-002-007

Factor E. “effects on natural environment, including effects on air and water quality, resources and flora and fauna” Environmental effects and conservation concerns of the transmission line and its 150-foot clear cut are numerous. Following are a few examples: 1- This land is part of the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest. Only a small portion is state owned. It was intended to help preserve the river and the land around it. 2- The recently proposed routes would eradicate a significant acreage of forest land, which is also extremely susceptible to erosion. This has multiple implications: a- decreased natural habitat for native wildlife species which impacts food sources, nesting and protective options which then results in reproductive compromise and increase predation susceptibility. b- Increased erosion which contributes to alteration of native flora allowing invasive species, ie. buckthorn, and potential for alteration of shading and temperature fluctuations in the river. c- decreased sources of CO2 absorption and potential sources of carbon credits 3- This part of the Zumbro River has a designated “catch and release” regulation for smallmouth bass. This fishery depends on high water quality, which will be damaged by disturbing the surrounding forests. 4- The river crossing on the most northern route proposal is in close proximity to a registered eagles nest. There is dense eagle activity north of Wabasha County 7 and the green bridge.

B-002-008

Factors H. “use or paralleling of existing rights-of-way, survey lines, natural division lines and agricultural field boundaries” **& J.** “ use of existing transportation, pipeline, and electrical transmission systems or rights-of-ways” Parts of the most recent route have transected property and do not appear to incorporate the need to parallel or utilize existing rights-of-way, survey lines, and existing transportation and transmissions lines. The primary beneficiaries of the transmission lines are the cities of Rochester and LaCrosse, both of which are serviced by existing transportation rights-of-way, ie: US Highway 52 and Interstate 90. These corridors are the logical routes for the transmission lines.

B-002-006

Your comment has been noted. Impacts to historic and archeological resources affected by the transmission line will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

B-002-007

Your comment has been noted. Potential impacts to wildlife, vegetation, water and air quality will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

B-002-008

Your comment has been noted. The criteria used to route the transmission line is described in the Macro Corridor Study which is available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. These criteria and routing process will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The project is still in the development and planning stages and the utilities have not yet permitted a route for the transmission line.

B-002-009

Factor L. “costs of constructing, operating, and maintaining the facility which are dependent on design and route” Several of the proposed routes have many corners and angles that add to the cost of construction, and these same routes require significant timber removal expenses. Routes following highways will have fewer corners and timbered areas. Utilizing the angle of US Highway 52 to Oronoco and Interstate 90, rather than using the northern routes, will reduce the length of the lines. These routes will also be constructed primarily on farmland, which does not need to be cleared initially or in the future. The timbered areas on the northern routes would need regular clearing or spraying, both of which carry monetary and ecological costs.

B-002-010

We sincerely hope you consider the above mentioned factors, and choose alternately a more appropriate route which has less impact on an area that has minimal existing damage. We also suggest that you consider route proposals closer to Route 52 and Interstate 90, and the cities that this project will benefit: Rochester and LaCrosse.

We thank you for these considerations, and look forward to future contact.

Respectfully submitted,

The Citizens of Mazeppa and Zumbro-Hyde Townships, and other interested parties.

Enclosures

Cc:

Bob Cupit, PUC MN

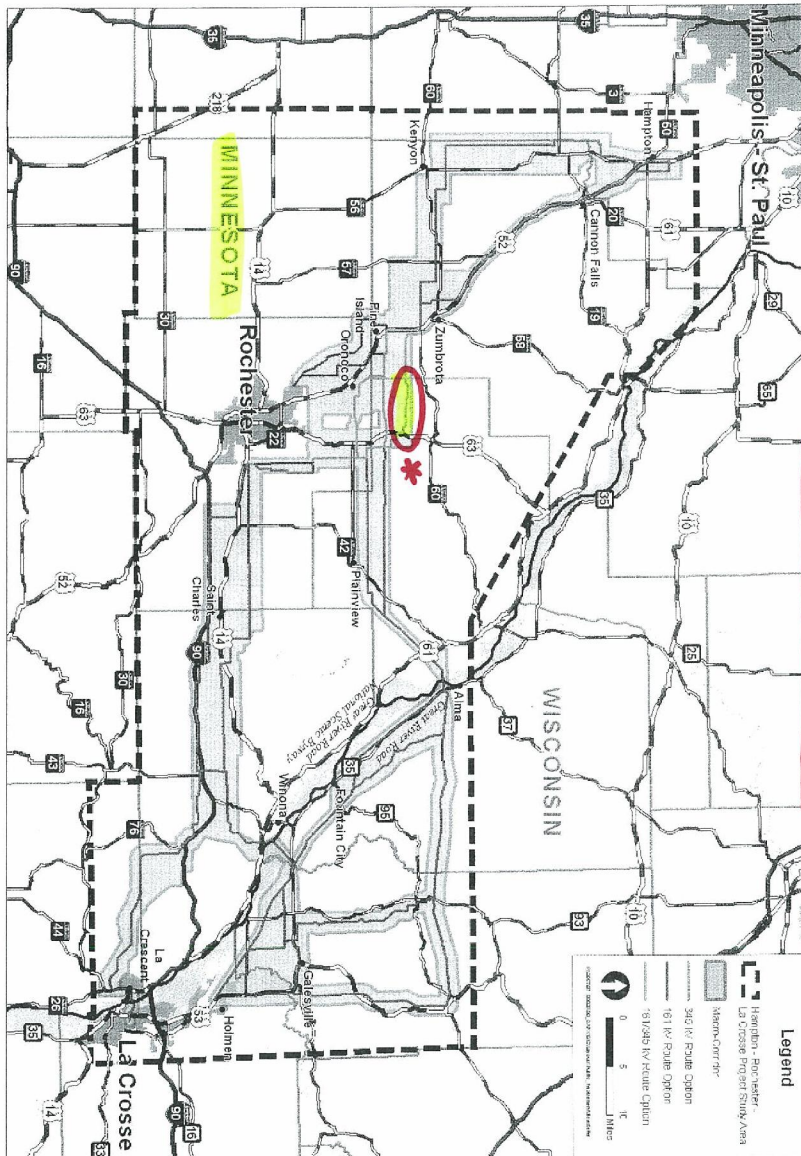
Matt Langan, MN DNR

B-002-009

Your comment has been noted. Potential impacts resulting from construction, operation, and maintenance of the transmission line will be addressed in resource sections throughout the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

B-002-010

Your comment has been noted. The criteria used to route the transmission line is described in the Macro Corridor Study which is available on the RUS website at:
<http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. These criteria and routing process will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The project is still in the development and planning stages and the utilities have not yet permitted a route for the transmission line.



**: Route of Concern*



Rohlfing Tree Farm

Minnesota

Wabasha County

Zumbro Township

T. 109 N. - R. 14 W